



Press Release

18 July 2005

Archives seek to woo Asian talent

People of Asian heritage are not sufficiently involved in the collection and preservation of British history according to The National Archives in Kew. As a result, the nation is missing out on a whole range of talents that can help bring the past alive for future generations. To combat this problem The National Archives, in association with the School of Library, Archive and Information Studies at University College London (UCL), has announced a pilot project to entice budding archivists from Asian communities to participate in an archival internship that will begin in November 2005. The initiative was announced at the Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage today.

Sarah Tyacke, Chief Executive of The National Archives, said:

'Archives in Britain should relate to all sections of British society. But there is currently a lack of trained archivists from Asian groups, which could lead to an imbalance in the collecting and care of records from all areas of the British population. By encouraging people from a more diverse range of cultural backgrounds to become involved in archives, we hope this pilot project will help to address this issue'.

At present 98% of archive users are white, and 2% of volunteers in libraries and archives are from minority ethnic groups. While no figures exist, evidence suggests that the pattern for the archive profession is similar.

The internship will provide pre-course experience to graduates planning to apply for a postgraduate course in archives and records management at UCL. The intern will be offered a place at UCL in September 2006, subject to the successful completion of the internship. The internship will last ten months and course fees will be paid by The National Archives.

The intern will participate in activities in a range of different departments in The National Archives and undertake a specific project in each to gain the required knowledge and experience.

Notes to Editors:

- Applicants for the internship will have, or expect to have, a second class degree, or equivalent qualification, and be highly motivated and enthusiastic about developing a career in the archive profession.
- Eligibility for home student university fees (eg as a national of the UK/another EU country) is essential.
- Sections 37 and 38 of the Race Relations Act 1976 apply.
- To apply please call 200 7649 6003 quoting the job reference number 43945 for the Positive Action post (minicom 020 7406 5790). Your call may be monitored for training and quality purposes. Closing date: 1 August 2005. Interviews will be held on 15 August 2005.
- Within museums and galleries nationally, just 4.4% of the workforce was of African and Asian descent compared to the UK workforce figure of 7%, according to a survey conducted by HOST Consultancy on the sector's labour force for the Cultural Heritage National Training Organisation (CHNTO) in 1998.
- People from ethnic minority backgrounds working in the sector are concentrated in lower grade positions. The museums and galleries workforce of African and Asian descent in London was 13.6% (CHNTO survey, 1998). Only 2% of volunteers in libraries and archives were from ethnic minority background, while the figure for museums, according to the Institute for Volunteering in a later (2002) report, was 4%.

The National Archives, Kew, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk has one of the largest archival collections in the world, spanning 1000 years of British history, from Domesday Book to newly released government papers. The free museum and research rooms are open to the public 6 days a week.

Over nine million records are available to view at Kew and some, including wills, First World War Army medal cards and Second World War Seamen's medal records are also available online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline

The Family Records Centre, Islington, which is jointly managed by The National Archives and the Office for National Statistics, holds the indexes (not the certificates themselves) for births, deaths and marriages for England and Wales from July 1837 and also copies of wills, before 1858, from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) and some other church courts.

Founded in 1826, UCL is the current Sunday Times University of the Year and the fourth-ranked UK university in the top 500 world universities for the latest league table produced by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University. In the government's most recent Research Assessment Exercise, 59 UCL departments achieved top ratings of 5* and 5, indicating research quality of international excellence.

UCL's centres of excellence include: Slade School of Fine Art; Bartlett School of Architecture; Benfield Hazard Research Centre; Institute of Child Health; Institute of Ophthalmology (Moorfields); Institute of Neurology; the Royal Free and University College Medical School.

UCL was the first English university established after Oxford and Cambridge, the first to admit students regardless of race, class, religion or gender, and the first to provide systematic teaching of law, architecture and medicine. UCL alumni include Mahatma Gandhi, Chaim Herzog, Junichiro Koizumi, Lord Woolf and members of the band Coldplay.